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OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE  
24 April 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : T-34 Tanks in the Cuban Revolutionary Army

1. One of the first estimates of Soviet T-34 tanks in Cuba was made in a paper prepared in July 1961 by an ad hoc committee of the USIB. This paper estimated the number of T-34 tanks at 104 with 15 positively identified. Approximately one year later NIE 85-2-62 carried 130 T-34 tanks. This number was later revised to about 200 in SNIE 85-4-62, dated 9 November 1962.

2. On 12-13 February 1963, when a new Cuban estimate was being prepared, DIA submitted for the estimate the figure of "185-210" T-34 tanks in Cuban hands. (The estimate referred to was not published.) At the time there was no indication that a DIA study of T-34 tanks had been undertaken, even though there were some indications that the estimate of T-34 tanks was low. At the time of the January parades, over 200 tanks were observed almost simultaneously in Havana and Santiago de Cuba, and at military installations in Cuba. Shortly after this, DIA began a review of the T-34 tanks in the Cuban Army. This review was not completed until late March, at which time CIA was informed of the results.

3. On 5 April DIA published in its Intelligence Summary the revised estimate of the number of T-34 tanks or self-propelled guns in Cuban hands, raising the number from 210 to 450. Although the complete tank study has not yet been published, CIA has obtained a copy of the draft. We agree that the earlier estimate of T-34 tanks may have been low. We have reviewed all photographic and collateral evidence bearing on the problem with NPIC analysts and can now account for about 350 T-34 tanks or self-propelled guns in the hands of Cuban forces.

DIA Declassification/Release Instructions on File

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4. In many instances there is agreement between the DIA and CIA figures of tanks at specific Cuban installations. However, DIA places greater reliance on older information and unsubstantiated collateral reporting, increasing the possibility of double counting. Furthermore, DIA uses the highest number of tanks observed at installations while we have used the figure most consistently reported.

5. If DIA used the same criteria to develop its estimate as CIA used, its figure would be about 370--only 20 tanks higher than the CIA figure. If DIA accepted this figure, the difference would be relatively small considering that high-altitude photography has some limitations for deriving an accurate order of battle on such mobile units as armored vehicles.

6. In many cases these vehicles are parked in areas with extensive tree cover, and in other more exposed areas the Cubans have covered them with camouflage netting or canvas. Moreover, SU-100 assault guns, heavy tanks, and tanks of US origin are difficult to distinguish from the T-34 tank in high-altitude photography, making it possible that both DIA and CIA totals could have included a few of these weapons. Despite these shortcomings, we feel that the figure of 350 T-34 tanks or self-propelled guns is the best estimate we can make with the evidence now available.

7. Our research has disclosed that the Director of Central Intelligence has referred to the strength of the Cuban armored forces on two occasions in recent months prior to the upward revision of the figures. On 6 February Mr. McCone showed the Stennis Subcommittee a chart depicting the number of Soviet tanks in Cuba on various dates, the latest of which was 1 February 1963. This chart had no breakdown into Cuban- and Soviet-manned tanks but the subsequent discussion of Soviet armored strength permitted the inference that about 235 tanks were in Cuban hands. A 19 March memorandum to the Stennis Subcommittee that was in response to specific questions indicated that 200 T-34 tanks were in Cuban hands.